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United States Attorney
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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SIX CHARGED IN DRUG RING SELLING COCAINE AND METHAMPHETAMINE FROM EL IMPERIAL RESTAURANT IN KANSAS CITY, KANSAS - FORFEITURE FILED

KANSAS CITY, Kan. – United States Attorney Eric Melgren announced today the culmination of **Operation Royal Flush**, a five year investigation into the distribution of large quantities of cocaine and methamphetamine from the El Imperial Restaurant located at 309 North 7th Street, Kansas City, Kansas, that resulted in the indictment of six people by a federal grand jury in Topeka.

Melgren said that **Operation Royal Flush** was a five year investigation by the Drug Enforcement Administration Task Force that coordinated the efforts of federal, state, and local law enforcement in the investigation of a multi-kilogram methamphetamine and cocaine distribution ring that was obtaining drugs from Texas and Mexico and selling these drugs from the El Imperial Restaurant.

The Drug Enforcement Administration was assisted in this investigation by the Kansas City, Kansas Police Department, FBI, Internal Revenue Service, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and the Bureau of Immigration and Custom Enforcement. All six individuals were arrested on November 6, 2003, four at the El Imperial Restaurant and two at their residences in Kansas City, Kansas.

Those indicted include:

- ! **Alberto Ortiz**, 47, Kansas City, Kansas, and **Mireya Ortiz-Morfin**, 43, Kansas City, Kansas, owners of the El Imperial Restaurant, along with **Pedro Ortega-Chavez**, 27, Kansas City, Kansas, **Salvador Ortega-Chavez**, 35, Kansas City,

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Kansas, **Antonio Mendoza**, age and address unknown, and **Jose L. Sandoval**, age and address unknown, are each charged with one count of conspiracy to distribute and possession with the intent to distribute five kilograms or more (11 pounds or more) of cocaine from September 1, 1999, through November 5, 2003; and one count of conspiracy to distribute and possession with the intent to distribute 500 grams or more (1.1 pounds or more) of methamphetamine from September 1, 1999, and November 5, 2003.

These individuals were also charged with the following:

Alberto Ortiz and **Mireya Ortiz-Morfin** are also charged with one count of managing and controlling a building, the El Imperial Restaurant at 309 North 7th Street, Kansas City, Kansas, for the purpose of unlawfully distributing, storing, and using cocaine and methamphetamine from September 1, 1999, through November 5, 2003.

Alberto Ortiz is also charged with distributing cocaine on July 19, 2003.

Mireya Ortiz-Morfin is also charged with distributing cocaine on July 9, 2003.

Pedro Ortega-Chavez is also charged with distributing cocaine on July 2, 2003, July 19, 2003, September 5, 2003, September 10, 2003, and September 26, 2003. **Pedro Ortega-Chavez** is also charged with distributing methamphetamine on August 21, 2003.

Salvador Ortega-Chavez is also charged with distributing cocaine on June 25, 2003, July 2, 2003, July 9, 2003, July 19, 2003, September 5, 2003, and September 26, 2003. **Salvador Ortega-Chavez** is also charged with distributing methamphetamine on August 21, 2003.

Antonio Mendoza is also charged with distribute cocaine on September 26, 2003.

Jose L. Sandoval is also charged with distributing cocaine on July 2, 2003, July 19, 2003, September 10, 2003, and September 26, 2003.

If convicted, each face a minimum of ten years and a maximum of life in federal prison, without parole, on each count of conspiracy to distribute and possession with the intent to distribute cocaine and methamphetamine. If convicted, those charged with distributing cocaine and methamphetamine face a maximum of twenty years in federal prison on each count. If convicted, **Alberto Ortiz** and **Mireya Ortiz-Morfin** also face a maximum of twenty years for managing and controlling a building for the purpose of distributing, storing, and using cocaine and methamphetamine.

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Melgren said that Alberto Ortiz, Mireya Ortiz-Morfin, Pedro Ortega-Chavez, Salvador Ortega-Chavez, Antonio Mendoza, and Jose L. Sandoval made their initial appearances in U.S. District Court in Kansas City, Kansas, on November 7, 2003, and have been detained pending trial.

On November 12, 2003, the U.S. Attorney's office filed a forfeiture action against El Imperial Restaurant at 309 North 7th, Kansas City, Kansas, alleging that the restaurant was used in the organized trafficking of cocaine, methamphetamine, and marijuana and is subject to forfeiture.

"The distribution of illegal drugs is a cause of violence in our communities. For the safety of our communities, and for the future of our citizens, we must continue to fight and win the war on drugs," Melgren said. "You may be assured that we will continue our aggressive prosecution of such cases."

DEA Special Agent in Charge William J. Renton, Jr., stated: "This investigation dismantled an entrenched and violent drug trafficking organization that had a national scope of operations. The St. Louis Division is committed to working tirelessly with our federal, state and local partners to remove this threat from our communities."

As in any criminal case, a person charged with a crime is considered innocent until and unless proven guilty. An indictment merely alleges criminal conduct.

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